

The Silver Ring

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Summary: Cleo discovers a magic ring that takes away mermaid powers for anyone who wears it. The girls think it will solve all their problems, but will it? What happens when a non-mermaid tries it on? What else does the ring do? Set 6 months after season 3.

1. The find

Cleo flew through the water, enjoying her early morning swim. Bella and Rikki were still sound asleep, exhausted from staying up so late into the night before.

The girls had been filling out college applications until the early morning hours. They were determined to get into the same school so that they could stick together. They didn't really care to have to find new friends who, inevitably, they would have to keep secrets from. But with deadlines approaching quickly, the girls were having to get applications in the mail as quickly as possible.

Cleo relaxed at the edge of the familiar moon pool, glad to have a bit of time to herself. She rested her head on her arms, deep in thought. She'd had an awful lot on her mind lately. Between her relationship with Lewis, work, and issues at home, it felt like there was always something to be thinking about. She played with her crystal necklace absentmindedly as she filtered through the thoughts in her head, looping it around her fingers.

Before she could catch it, the leather strap of the necklace snapped. The crystal slipped through Cleo's fingers and sliced through the water, falling down into the depths of the moon pool.

"Shoot." Cleo murmured as she watched the necklace disappear into the deep blue water. She took a quick breath of oxygen before diving down after it.

Cleo swam easily to the sandy bottom of the moon pool. It was quite a bit deeper than she had expected it to be, but she reached it in only a few moments. She searched through the sand, looking through the

darkness for her necklace.

It was hard to see down there, so far underneath the surface. Cleo saw a glittering shape in the sand not far from her. She quickly reached for it, cupping it in her hand. She swam up to the surface without pause, glad to be away from the blackness of the sea.

Cleo surfaced at the edge of the pool. She opened her hand and examined what she had brought back up with her. To her surprise, it was not the familiar blue crystal that she held. It was a ring. A strange ring, she noticed. The band was intricate, almost ugly. It was thick and made of silver, with a strange decoration around the band. It had one light stone in the middle, but it was so embedded in the silver band you could barely see it.

Cleo turned it around in her hand, examining it. It was beautiful to her. Reluctantly, Cleo set the ring on the edge of the pool. Once again, she dove down to the bottom of the pool. It didn't take her long to find her necklace. She swam back up to the surface and quickly refastened it around her neck. She checked to make sure it was secure before focusing in on the silver ring that lay on the sand.

"Where did you come from?" She spoke to the silver as she turned the ring over and over in her hand. It felt strangely warm in her hand, even though it had come out of the chilled water. She looked at it for a few moments before deciding to bring it back to her home to show her friends. She gripped the ring tightly in her hand and headed back towards the shore.

"So tell me about it, what did you find?" Lewis walked over with an amused grin on his face.

Cleo stood up from the couch with a smile and held the ring out to him. "Any idea what it is? I found it at the bottom of the moon pool."

"Rikki, I think it's just a ring. Someone must have dropped it." Lewis gave his girlfriend a humoring look. "Why do you think it's anything special?"

"I don't know..." Cleo took the ring from her boyfriend and toyed with it. "There's just something about it."

"It's kinda ugly." Lewis wrinkled his nose at it. "But you should put it on anyway. Everything you wear looks instantly beautiful." Lewis pulled Cleo in for a kiss.

"Nice one." Cleo smiled as she kissed him back as she slipped the ring onto her finger. She knew it wasn't delicate, but she felt like she was supposed to wear it.

The pair met up with the rest of their standard group. There was Will, who dated Bella. They were practically perfect together. The lot of them spent most of their free time either at Will's boat shed or at the cafe that Zane and Rikki owned. Zane and Rikki had a fiery relationship. They bickered frequently, but they always got past it. The six of them were practically inseparable.

Today they had spent the afternoon at the cafe. Bella was rehearsing

with her band, Rikki and Zane were working, and Will, Cleo, and Lewis were hanging out at a table in the corner.

"And it was at the bottom of the moon pool?" Will turned the ring over in his hands.

"Yup." Cleo took it back from him and placed it tightly on her ring finger. "I'd love to know who dropped it there."

"We know, we know, what a fascinating mystery." Lewis wrapped his arm around Cleo's shoulders and held her tightly. "But onto more exciting issues..."

Cleo rolled her eyes at Lewis before turning to Will. "How is training going?"

After a month of Sophie's begging, Will had agreed to dive in a local competition. Sophie was trying to get a coaching job and she wanted to use Will as a demonstration of her coaching technique.

"It feels like we never stopped." Will rolled his eyes slightly. "She's still a coaching machine."

"But it's just the one dive comp, right?" Lewis asked.

"Yeah." Will nodded. "I kinda feel like I owe her."

"And what are you three up to?" Rikki pulled up a seat and flopped down at the table.

"We're just catching up on Will's training." Cleo said. "Are you done with work?"

"Yeah." Rikki shrugged. "Zane can handle it for a while by himself."

"Well I've got to be going." Will stood. "Sophie will be freaking because I'm late for training."

"Have fun with the slave driver." Rikki called over her shoulder as Will headed towards Bella to say goodbye.

"I still think we should try harder to be friends with Sophie." Cleo said diplomatically.

"No thanks." Zane said quickly as he walked up to the table. "Sophie's a manipulative pain in the neck."

"Agreed." Rikki nodded. "And I'm about sick of this place. Fancy a swim?" She looked at Cleo expectantly.

"Sure." Cleo reluctantly pulled herself away from Lewis.

"Aw come on..." Lewis held onto Cleo tightly. "Don't go."

"You're welcome to swim with us." Cleo said with a dazzling smile that made Lewis melt.

"Ok." He said enthusiastically. "I've been swimming really well lately."

Cleo and Rikki exchanged the same look with one another. They knew that Lewis couldn't keep up with them in the water, but he sure loved to try.

"Alright then, Lewis." Rikki said with a smirk. "We're just gonna head that way then."

The three of them headed out of the cafe and onto the beach.

"Wait, I found a new place. You'll love it." Rikki led the group quickly over the beach.

They walked almost a mile until they came to a series of rocks in the sand. The rocks created a beautiful ledge that extended out over the water.

"This is gorgeous, Rikki." Cleo couldn't wait to jump into the water.

Rikki climbed up onto the top rock, careful not to lose her footing. She dove out into the sea. It was maybe 10 feet to the water, but she dove in gracefully. She surfaced a few moments later, golden tail shining in the water behind her.

"Come on in!" She shouted. "It's great in here!"

"Coming, coming." Lewis humored her. "After you?" He extended a hand to Cleo, helping her out onto the rock.

Cleo took his hand with a smile. "Thank you." She said happily. "See you down there?"

Lewis nodded, giving Cleo one more kiss before stepping slightly aside to give her room to dive.

Cleo took a deep breath and leaped off the rock into the water. She landed in the water with a huge splash and allowed herself to sink down into the sea.

She sank down, enjoying the darkness of the ocean. All of a sudden, she found herself completely out of breath. She needed oxygen, and badly. She quickly pushed herself up to the surface, gasping for air. Her legs kicked behind her as she inhaled and exhaled. She had not been much of a swimmer before she became a mermaid, and without her fin she was just about to sink like a stone.

"Cleo?" Lewis had been watching the whole time. It was taking way longer than usual for Cleo to change. "Are you alright?"

Cleo kicked her legs in panic. Why hadn't her fin appeared? What was going on?

"I don't think so." She called up to Lewis. "I don't know what's going on, I'm human." Cleo kicked hard, struggling to keep her head above water.

Lewis didn't hesitate. He dove down into the water and swam quickly to Cleo. He held her tightly in his arms and guided her clumsily to the shore, assisted by Rikki.

"What's going on?" Rikki was slightly panicked as she looked at Cleo's legs. "Where is her tail?"

"I don't know." Lewis laid Cleo gently on the sandy bank. "Cleo, how do you feel?"

Cleo looked into Lewis's eyes worriedly. "I feel human." She said quietly.

It was a weird feeling. Cleo hadn't felt human in the water for a few years. She was used to changing into a mermaid, but nothing was changing now. She still had two legs. What had happened?

Lewis and Rikki chattered around her, asking questions and tossing out ideas of what had happened. Lewis examined the position of the sun in the sky and began a debate with Rikki about whether or not the sun could also control mermaid powers.

Cleo let the pair of them talk. They weren't paying much attention to her, which gave Cleo a few moments to examine herself. She looked at her feet, which were in a pair of soaking wet shoes. She examined her legs, and then held her hands out in front of her.

Her eyes landed on the ring. It felt especially hot around her finger. She held her hand up close to her face. The stone at the center of the ring had changed. It was no longer pale blue. Cleo's eyes narrowed. The stone had changed to a deep black color.

Cleo grasped the ring and pulled it off of her hand quickly. Instantly, her familiar fin appeared.

Lewis and Rikki stopped talking at the same time and looked at Cleo in shocked silence.

"Well there it is." Rikki held herself up on her arms as she spoke. "What took so long?"

Wordlessly, Cleo held the ring up to Lewis.

"It was this?" Lewis took the ring from her hastily and held it up close to his eye.

Cleo looked from her friend to her boyfriend. "I told you the ring was special."

2. Finding things out

"So..." Lewis turned the ring over in his hands. "You think the ring is responsible? Cleo, that makes no scientific sense."

"Lewis." Rikki said sarcastically. "We are mermaids who were changed by the magic of a moon pool. Do you really want to talk about scientific sense?"

"Ah, point taken." Lewis held the ring back out to Cleo. "Put it back on."

"I don't know..." Cleo took the ring but didn't slide it onto her

finger. "What if it's permanent this time or something?"

"I'll do it." Rikki swiped the ring from Cleo's hand and put it firmly on the fourth finger of her right hand.

Instantly, Rikki's fin disappeared. Her two legs, clothed in blue soaking wet shorts, kicked in the water.

Rikki immediately yanked the ring off her hand. Her fin reappeared only a second later. She looked at Lewis with wide eyes and thrust the ring into his hands.

"Here, you take it." She panicked. "Go figure out how it works. Go be a scientist. Go!"

"Hey, hey." Cleo reached out and stopped Lewis from leaving. "Let's all go. You'll need test subjects."

Lewis nodded and helped both of the girls out of the water. They each made a phone call as they headed towards Will's boat shed.

Each of them hung up their phones as they reached the front door.

"Will said the spare key is under the mat." Rikki said. "He told us to go on in, he'll be here after he finishes training."

"Great." Lewis quickly opened the door. "Zane is on his way here now. He seemed really interested."

"Oh good," Rikki was anxious to show her boyfriend what they had found. "Bella is coming over after the band finishes rehearsal."

The group settled around the large wooden table in the middle of the familiar shed. Lewis set the ring in the middle of the table and left it there. All three of them just stared at it for a while.

"What else do you think it does?" Cleo murmured.

"No idea." Rikki answered.

Lewis poked at the ring with a pencil. "Ok, first things first." He picked up the ring, sliding it onto the tip of his pencil. He picked up a clear glass cup and filled it with tap water. He tilted the pencil, letting the ring plink down into the water. He slid the glass to the center of the table and pulled out a pad of paper and a pencil.

"Hey guys." Zane hurried into the shed and shut the door tightly behind him. He gave Rikki a quick kiss on the cheek before joining the huddle around the table. "Fill me in."

Lewis quickly told Zane what little they knew about the weird little silver ring. It was still in the cup of water. Small bubbles had appeared on the surface of the ring. As they watched, the blue stone very gradually turned to deep black.

"Now what?" Zane was staring at the glass without blinking. "Do we take it out?"

"Yes." Lewis didn't move a muscle. "But I don't really want to touch it."

"Me neither." Zane agreed.

"Well Cleo and I can't touch it." Rikki shrugged. "It's in a cup of water." _

Lewis grabbed a pair of tongs and a hand towel from the counter. He carefully fished the ring out of the water and dried it off with the towel. He picked the ring up carefully and held it up to the light.

"The stone is black..." He said slowly. He gestured to the girls. "One of you should put it on."

"I don't know about that." Rikki took a step backwards. "That ring freaks me out."

"Hey everyone." Bella breezed inside and walked over to join the group. "What's all this about a ring?"

"Bella, perfect timing." Lewis held the ring out to her. "Put this on right quick."

"Ok." Bella said simply. She took the ring from Lewis and put it on. "It's pretty..." She admired it on her finger. "What's it supposed to do?"

"Um..." Lewis said thoughtfully. "You see, Bella, it's supposed to-"

Before Lewis could finish speaking Zane stuck his hand in the glass cup of water the ring had been in and flicked it at Bella, causing water to splash all over her.

"What the hell, Zane?" Bella tried to dry herself off as quickly as possible.

"It's ok, you're not going to change because you have the ring on-WHAT THE-" Zane disappeared under the table all of a sudden just as Bella fell to the floor.

No one in the room knew where to look. Their eyes flicked back and forth in unison and their mouths hung wide open.

Bella was the only one who seemed unaware that anything out of the ordinary had happened. She lay on the floor, her golden fin extended behind her. She propped herself up on her elbows. "Hey Lewis." She tried to get his attention. "Can you hand me that towel..." Bella stopped talking as her eyes focused on Zane.

Zane was laying on his stomach on the floor too. His top had disappeared and behind him extended a long blue tail. Wait- Bella squinted her eyes. A TAIL?

Zane pulled himself to lean on his elbows. He had a dazed look on his face. Suddenly realization began to dawn on him. He slowly turned his head to look behind him.

"Zane, you have a..." Lewis's voice drifted away.

You could hear Zane's yelling from two miles away.

"Zane, Zane, calm down." Rikki knelt beside her boyfriend and tried to get him to lower his voice. She held her hand out over him and steamed the water off of him quickly.

Zane didn't calm down. He jumped to his feet and then instantly fell back down. Rikki and Lewis helped him to a couch and laid him down on it.

"I had a- I was -, I mean-" Zane stuttered. "Lewis! Why did I have a-a- a-"

"I don't know." Lewis said uneasily. "Bella you'd better take that ring off."

Bella removed the silver band immediately and tossed it to Lewis, who dropped it onto the table as if it was scalding hot. She held her hand out and turned the water clinging to her into a hard gel and then brushed it away. Her legs reappeared a moment later. She quickly rushed over to where Zane lay on the couch.

"Is anyone going to tell me what in the world is going on?" Bella looked pointedly at Cleo and Rikki.

"Well, Bella." Cleo swallowed but couldn't bring herself to blink. She spoke in a monotone voice. "I found a silver ring with a blue stone at the bottom of the moon pool. I put it on and jumped into the water and I didn't get my tail until I took the ring back off. Then the same thing happened to Rikki. So we brought the ring here to test and we put it in a cup of water. And then Zane turned into a mermaid." Cleo finished.

"Where is the ring?" Bella furrowed her brow.

"Duh Bella, you just took it off." Zane managed to speak.

"No I didn't, that ring didn't have a blue stone." Bella shot back.

"Wait-" Lewis grabbed the ring off of the table. "She's right. The stone is still black. It hasn't changed back to blue yet."

"Really?" Cleo peeked over Lewis's shoulder. "It changed back to blue instantly when we took it off in the ocean."

"Yeah it did." Lewis examined the ring closely. The stone had lightened a bit but it still wasn't the same light blue color.

"Ok." Zane stood up abruptly. "What just happened to _me?_"

Everyone turned to face him. "Uh..." Lewis scratched his head.

"Oh that's just great." Zane said sarcastically. "Fantastic!"

"Um, Zane, why don't you try again. Stick your arm under the sink and see if it happens again?"

"What? No way!" Zane backed away from Lewis. Unfortunately, he backed right into Cleo, who was prepared with a bottle of water.

She turned the bottle over Zane's head and quickly jumped away from him.

Zane sputtered as the water flowed down his shoulders. He ran towards the towel and began manically drying himself off.

"Nonononononononono..." He said over and over as he tried to dry himself off.

"Zane!" Rikki called to him, but Zane was too preoccupied to notice. She quickly walked over to him. She couldn't touch him because he was still wet but she snapped her fingers in front of him. "Zane, look at me."

Zane's eyes focused. "Rikki I can't talk right now, I'm trying not to turn into a..."

"Merman?" Rikki finished. "You won't. It's been over twenty seconds."

"It's... what?" Zane stopped moving.

"It's past that time, you aren't changing." Rikki said clearly.

"I'm not changing." Zane said slowly. Suddenly his face brightened. "I'm not changing!" He wrapped his arms around Rikki in a huge bear hug and shook her back and forth.

"Aw, Zane-" Rikki got out before her fin appeared. Zane was still soaking wet.

"Oops, sorry Rikki." Zane said as he laid her gently on the floor. He looked himself over. "I didn't change!"

"What in the world?" Lewis looked at the ring once more as Zane continued celebrating. "I don't get it. Bella had the ring on. She shouldn't have changed at all. And Zane isn't even a mermaid, why did water change him?"

"It wasn't just any water though," Cleo pointed out. "It was the water the ring had soaked in for so long."

"You're right." Lewis frowned. "You know, I think there's a lot more to this ring than we realize."

3. Out for ideas

Hey guys :) Sorry for the slow update, I'll do better in the future! Thanks so much for everyone who reads and reviews, I really appreciate it. I'd love to suggest that you guys check out my friend Jack Cross's fanfic 'H2O: The Battle of Mako.' It's a great story! :) I hope everyone is doing well! Cheers!

* * *

><p>"What did I miss?" Will asked as he burst into the shed. Everyone looked up at him silently<p>

The whole gang, Lewis, Zane, Will, Rikki, Bella, and Cleo, all stood around the table looking at the tiny silver ring. The stone had returned to a beautiful blue color, but no one wanted to touch it just yet.

"Ok." Lewis was the one who spoke up. "This is what we're doing."

Lewis swiftly filled the same glass cup up with water and dropped the ring into it.

"The first rule of being a scientist is to make sure your results can be replicated." He said in a monotone voice. "So we do the same thing again and see if the same thing happens."

"Whoa." Zane took a step back. "You are NOT putting any of that ring water on me." He crossed his arms over his chest.

"Fine. Will?" Lewis looked to the tall blonde expectantly.

"Ah, I guess I'll do it." Will said hesitantly. He looked to the three mermaids. "But if I change I'll expect you girls to dry me off immediately."

"Of course." Cleo nodded.

"Alright, we have the human, which mermaid wants to be splashed?" Lewis asked as he observed the ring. The stone had begun to turn to black.

"Me." Bella said confidently. "Splash me again. I want to support Will." She wound her fingers in his and smiled up at him.

"Support away." Lewis said distractedly. The stone in the ring was now a jet black color and tiny bubbles had appeared on the surface, just like before. "Ready?"

"Yes." Will said nervously. "How should we do this, exactly?"

"Stand here." Bella took him by the arm and led him to the center of the room, away from anything he might hurt himself on if he fell to the floor. "Remember," She whispered. "We don't even know that anything will happen."

Will nodded, unconvinced. "I'm seriously nervous." He whispered to Bella as Lewis walked over with the water.

"No worries." Bella murmured back. She gave Will a quick kiss on the cheek before looking up. "We're ready." She said firmly. "Let's figure this out."

"Alright." Lewis carefully fished the ring out of the cup and dried it off on a hand towel. He held it out to Bella.

Bella took the ring and shoved it onto her finger as Will closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Lewis used his tongs to flick water over the both of them. Barely ten seconds later they both fell to the floor.

"Holy crap!" Will's eyes were as wide as saucers as he looked at the fin that had replaced his legs. He looked to his girlfriend in a panic. "Bella! Fix it!"

"It's ok, it's ok." Rikki said as she hurried over to where Will laid on the floor. She held one hand over the blue fin and quickly dried it off. "All fixed."

"Thank goodness." Will said breathlessly as he hugged his knees to his chest. "That was _way_ too weird."

"I'll say." Rikki said in an amazed voice as she picked examined Bella's hand. She slid the ring off of her friend's hand and held it up to her face. "So this ring does what exactly?" She looked to Lewis expectantly. "Turns boys into mermaids?"

"And mermaids into humans?" Cleo added.

"That doesn't make any sense." Bella said, puzzled. "I was wearing the ring and I turned into a mermaid."

"Hey Rikki," Lewis called. "What color is the stone? In the middle of the ring?"

"It's... changing back to blue, why?" Rikki turned the ring over in her hand.

"Because it was black when Bella put it on." Lewis grabbed a bottle of water off the counter and walked briskly over to Rikki. "Is it back to it's normal color?"

Rikki nodded. "I think so."

Put the ring on." Lewis said anxiously.

"Ok..." Rikki put it on and held her hand out. "It's a little bit bulky for my taste-"

Lewis dumped the water over Rikki's head without pause and then stepped back to watch.

"Lewis!" Rikki brushed water off of her skin. "What are you thinking?" She sat down quickly on the floor so that she wouldn't hurt herself when she fell. She waited for several seconds but nothing happened. "Wait..." Rikki spoke slowly. She hadn't changed.

"Ha! Just what I thought!" Lewis practically skipped over to her. "Now take the ring off."

Rikki obeyed. The second the ring left her finger her legs transformed into a long golden fin.

"Ok." Lewis grabbed the ring from Rikki. He was completely lost in scientist-land as he rambled. He paced back and forth, speaking mostly to himself. "So we've found that when a mermaid puts the ring on it keeps her a human even when she gets wet. As long as the stone is blue at the time." Lewis continued pacing. "We soaked the ring in a container of water for a period of time and the stone in the center

of the ring turned black. Then the water the ring had been soaking in managed to turn Zane into a mermaid- uh, merman and Bella turned into a mermaid. Because the stone was BLACK." Lewis spoke faster and faster. "And the same thing happened to Will and Bella. But after we waited a bit the ring turned blue again and THEN it kept Rikki human when I splashed her with water! And then she took the ring off and transformed! This ring is seriously cool, I mean-"

"LEWIS." Cleo placed her hands firmly on his shoulders, stopping him. "Slow down. At least take a breath. We didn't follow any of that."

Lewis looked around the room. Everyone was staring at him with blank expressions on their faces. "Ah, sorry guys." He said sheepishly.

"Let's just slow all of that down." Cleo guided Lewis gently to the table and sat him in a chair. She placed a notebook and pencil in front of him. "Now start again. _Slowly." _

Lewis did just that. He laid out what they had learned about the ring. "So we know that somehow the water the ring had soaked in had been, I don't know, contaminated by the powers of the ring, and it affected Zane inversely."

"Meaning..." Zane raised his eyebrows.

"Watch." Lewis picked up the ring and held it out to the group. "What color is the stone now?"

"Blue..." Rikki said slowly.

"Ok." Lewis took a long, deep breath and slid the ring onto his finger.

"Nothing's happened." Cleo furrowed her brow.

"Poor that cup of water on my arm." Lewis pointed to a blue glass on the end of the counter.

Cleo obeyed, gently pouring the cool water over her boyfriend's arm. Barely ten seconds later Lewis fell to the floor. The rest of the group huddled around him, looking down at where he had fallen. Sure enough, a long blue tail had replaced his legs. Will and Zane took an instinctive step away from the fin.

Lewis quickly removed the ring, his hands shaking. His legs immediately returned. He jumped up, holding the ring over his head. "We have a magic ring!"

The words echoed through the room as everyone stared at Lewis with gaping open mouths.

"Thanks for stating the obvious." Rikki rolled her eyes slightly as she took the ring from him. "But where did it come from?"

"And more importantly, just what can it do?" Bella said nervously.

"I'll need to run some tests on it." Lewis said as he scribbled

furiously onto the paper in front of him.

"Tests?" Rikki said with a laugh. "Let us run the tests, Lewis. We're the ones it was intended for." She paced slowly. "Do you know how long it's been since I've been able to walk along the beach with my feet in the surf?"

"And I could help Will train at the pool without having to hide from Sophie." Bella said excitedly.

"My Dad's been begging me to go out with him on his fishing boat. I could actually go!" Cleo said happily.

The girls each began babbling with giddiness as they started planning out all of the things they could do with the help of the silver ring. Suddenly all of the activities they'd had to avoid over the years seemed like they might be possible again, and the girls were more than a little hopeful.

"Listen, guys." Lewis held his hands up to get everyone's attention. "I- ok, we really do need to do some tests before you guys go out in public with the ring. We don't know how it works. Yes, it keeps you human, but for how long? You don't need to go changing into a mermaid in the middle of the beach."

"Lewis is right." Cleo said loyally. "We need to make sure we know exactly what the ring does before we try to wear it in public."

"I guess so." Rikki said reluctantly. "But I really want to wear it sunbathing. On the beach. And in the cafe! It will be so much easier at work if I don't have to stress getting wet!"

"And you can." Lewis said calmly. "After I run a few more tests."

Rikki backed up reluctantly and walked over to Zane, who put one arm around her shoulders. "We should head back to the cafe." She said as she checked the time.

"Yes we should." Zane said, a little too eagerly. He had had a fin today, and he hadn't liked it one bit. He was definitely ready to get out of there and get back to his office where everything made sense. He guided Rikki towards the door.

"Let me know what you come up with, Lewis!" Rikki called over her shoulder as the couple walked out of the shed.

"You got it." Lewis said absently and he continued writing.

"Oh shoot." Will looked at his watch. "Sophie expected me at the training pool twenty minutes ago. I've got to get going."

"Didn't you already train today?" Bella caught Will by the hand before he ran out the door.

"For two hours." Will spoke quickly. "But Sophie is starting me on training at three different intervals during the day. She says it will build my stamina more effectively. So I've got to get going!" Will pecked Bella on the cheek before running out the door.

"Sophie is such a training dragon." Bella muttered.

"Maybe you can go with him soon." Cleo said with a grin. "Once we figure out just what this ring is about."

Lewis, Cleo and Bella worked for hours testing the ring. Lewis used the girls and himself as guinea pigs for his experiments. He wrote down everything he observed.

1. When the stone is blue, the ring keeps the girls from turning into mermaids. If a human puts on the ring when the stone is blue nothing happens, but if that human gets wet he immediately turns into a merman.

2. Once the stone turns black, it no longer keeps the mermaid from growing her tail. The black stone seems to have no effect on humans.

3. If the rings soaks for a long enough period of time in (Lewis found) less than one gallon of water, that water takes on the properties of the ring. Thus, Lewis was changed when he touched the water the ring had soaked in.

4. Once the stone in the middle of the ring turned black, it's power over the mermaids wore off. They became mermaids once again, even if they were wearing the gem.

The most important thing the group found out was that the amount of time it took for the stone to turn from blue to black was not consistent. Sometimes the stone changed after a few minutes, sometimes it took the better part of an hour. If there was a way to predict the amount of time it would take for the stone to change, Lewis couldn't figure out what it was.

Eventually the three became exhausted. Lewis set the ring in a small box and tucked it into his bag to head home.

It was late that night when a familiar blonde crept into Lewis's room. Lewis lay flat on his back, snoring loudly. He never heard a sound as the blonde pulled the box from his bag and ran off into the night.

4. Ideas that failed

Rikki dashed down the street after leaving Lewis's house, the box clasped tightly in her hands. Once she had gotten far enough away to know she wasn't being followed she knelt on the pavement and opened the box. The little ring glittered inside. Rikki reached for it and slowly slid it onto her finger.

Rikki loved being a mermaid, really she did, but the temptation of being able to jump into a pool or walk through the cafe without worrying was too much for her to resist. She checked her watch. It was just after 4am. She probably had 4 or 5 hours to play before Lewis woke up and noticed the ring missing.

It ended up only being one hour before Lewis woke up and checked his bag. He'd been too excited to sleep in and had woken up practically in the middle of the night. He'd thought he would go ahead and run a

couple basic tests before trying to go back to sleep. Now he reached for his phone frantically.

"Lewis?" Cleo barely managed to speak. She was still practically asleep.

"Cleo!" Lewis practically shouted. "The ring is gone!"

"Wha- gone?" Cleo furrowed her brow.

"Yes, gone." Lewis panicked.

"Are you sure you brought it home?" Cleo murmured, still trying to wake herself up.

"Yes, Cleo." Lewis said exasperatedly. "Yes I brought the ring home."

"I'll call Bella and Rikki, you call Zane and Will." Cleo sat up, stretching her arms over her head. "One of them probably knows where it is."

"Ok. Call me after you've spoken to them" Lewis ended the call and immediately dialed Will's number. He didn't really expect the boys to know anything but he didn't have any other ideas.

Cleo dialed the phone and held it to her ear. She figured that Lewis had either left the ring at Will's shed by accident or had just misplaced it at his house, but she was willing to try to help.

"Hey Rikki, it's Cleo." She said quietly, trying not to wake her family.

"Hey Cleo! What's up?" Rikki's voice was way too bright and too chipper for that late at night.

Cleo frowned slightly. "Lewis can't seem to find the magic ring, do you happen to know where it is?"

"I sure do!" Rikki said boldly. "It's right here on my finger!"

"Rikki!" Cleo practically shrieked. She quickly lowered her voice. "What are you thinking?" She hissed. "Lewis is freaking out, we don't know how that ring works yet, what are you doing with it?"

"Not too much." Rikki said vaguely. "I just wanted to sit on the beach for a bit. Without changing." She added.

"Where are you?" Cleo was fully awake now.

"Oh come on, Cleo." Rikki whined. "I'll bring it back in just a bit, I just wanted to hang out for a bit."

"Rikki..." Cleo pulled on her shoes and a jacket as she spoke. "_Where are you?"_

Rikki sighed. "I'm beside the dock outside the cafe, ok?"

"I'll be right there." Cleo said as she dashed out the door into the

warm early morning air. "Do _not_ use that ring!"

"Yes, mom." Rikki said sarcastically as she flipped the phone shut. She looked down at the ring on her finger, admiring the way it shone in the moonlight. She was sitting just a few feet away from the water. She had found herself nervous now that she was here. She hadn't touched water without changing in over two years, since the night they tricked Dr. Denman into thinking that their powers were gone. The blue gem glittered, casting a reflection on her face.

Rikki made up her mind. She stood and walked carefully right to the edge of the water. She took a deep breath and stepped one foot in and waited, eyes closed. Nothing happened. The tiniest of smiles crossed Rikki's face. She was standing in the water. Just standing there. And it felt surprisingly _good.

>Rikki checked the stone in the ring. Still blue. Rikki sat down in the wet sand, not minding the fact that her clothes soaked through in seconds. She checked her watch. The sun would be rising before too much longer. Rikki knew Cleo would be there soon to escort her back home. Sure, if she wanted to she could get up and go elsewhere, but Rikki didn't really want to cause too much trouble. She just wanted to sit in the water for a bit. She checked the ring again. The stone was slightly darker but still mostly blue. Rikki relaxed and watched as the sky began to lighten.

Cleo ran the whole way to the cafe, only pausing long enough to catch her breath. Relief flooded over her when she spotted Rikki's blonde hair at the edge of the water. She jogged up behind her, panting as she tried to catch her breath. "Rikki." She gasped.

"Hey Cleo." Rikki said casually, not bothering to turn her head.

Cleo collapsed on the sand, a few feet behind her friend. "What were you thinking? Stealing that out of Lewis's bag?"

"I dunno." Rikki answered. She reluctantly pulled her legs out of the water and stood, dripping.

Cleo backed up instinctively. Her eyes darted up towards the cafe. People were starting to appear on the streets. "Careful, don't get get me wet."

Rikki looked at Cleo with laughing eyes. "Really, Cleo?" She asked with a smile. "I've had little practice with that, don't you?"

Several people had appeared, very near them, on the beach. They were just locals out for a swim, but they still made Cleo nervous.

"Just come on." Cleo said impatiently. "We need to get you home and get that ring back to Lewis." She turned on her heel and began marching back towards home.

"Should I take this off?" Rikki waved the ringed hand in the air.

"No, shhh." Cleo said quickly. "You can't change right now, there are too many people around."

Rikki dragged her feet but followed Cleo. She held her hand out over her clothes and slowly tightened her fist. Nothing happened. Rikki furrowed her brow. Why wasn't her power working? Rikki remembered the ring, she was still wearing it. The stone had faded to a dark gray, but it wasn't black yet. Rikki wasn't too worried about it, she just kept on walking. She wrung water out of her top, trying to get her clothes to dry a bit quicker.

More and more people were appearing out in public.

"I just can't believe you would do that, Rikki." Cleo lectured as she marched. "I mean, we really don't know much of anything about that ring and here you are out in the open in the water with it. It could stop working at any moment-"

Rikki walked behind Cleo without really listening. She was beginning to feel a little funny, like her stomach was flipping over.

"If Lewis had been the one to find you he would have completely been freaking out." Cleo continued. She didn't notice that Rikki had stopped walking several steps ago. "I just can't believe you would be so reckless. You really need to be more careful from now on..." She finally realized that Rikki was no longer walking beside her.

"Cleo I feel kinda funny." Rikki said with an odd look on her face.

"What kind of funny?" Cleo walked back to her friend.

"The kind of funny we feel when we get wet... only slower..." Rikki was starting to panic slightly.

"Rikki, quick." Cleo said hurriedly. "What color is the stone? On the ring?"

"Ah, black?" Rikki realized she'd made a huge mistake. The ring didn't work when the stone had changed color. It was like it's magic had been drained away.

"We need to get you to the water NOW." Cleo started running. They were about a block inland from the shore.

"I don't think we'll make it." Rikki said uncertainly. She tried to run but her legs were beginning to feel rubbery.

"Rikki, what do we do?" Cleo couldn't reach out and help Rikki run without touching her wet clothes. They made it half a block before Rikki stopped completely.

"Cleo, it's starting!" She shrieked. The tingling was so bad she could barely move her legs, she knew she was only seconds away from transforming.

"Um..." Cleo took a quick look around. There were people nearby, but none were too close and they didn't seem to be paying attention to Rikki. "Come on."

Cleo judged the time it would take them to make it to the water. She grabbed one of Rikki's arms and draped it over her shoulder. Rikki's

wet t-shirt dripped all over her. She knew she had about ten seconds to get both of them into the ocean.

Cleo ran as fast as she could manage, dragging Rikki along with her. Rikki's legs had just started to form a tail when they made it. Cleo threw both of them off the dock in a flash.

Both of them sank down into the water, out of sight of anyone who might be watching. Cleo grabbed onto Rikki's wrist with a vice-like grip and dragged her through the water out towards Mako Island.

"Oh thank goodness." Lewis sank down onto his bed. "What does she have to say for herself?" Lewis rubbed his temples.

"I think she feels appropriately bad." Cleo looked at Rikki out of the corner of her eye. "We'll be back soon. With the ring."

"Ok. Be careful." Lewis shut his phone and dropped it onto his bedspread. "Cleo is with Rikki. They have the ring." Lewis flopped down, suddenly exhausted.

"That's good." Will said with a yawn. He'd come over as soon as he'd gotten Lewis's call. Lewis had phoned Zane as well, and he had promised to let them know if he heard anything.

Will's phone rang shrilly, making both Lewis and him jump. His face darkened as he read the display. "I have to go." He stood reluctantly. "Sophie is waiting for me down at the pool."

Lewis nodded. He stood up and stretched his arms up over his head. "I should get dressed anyway. I have a feeling we're going to have a really busy day."

End
file.